2: Hockings E-4,5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50

175 plateau, from 1807,[17] were too demanding of the dues they had
652 paid the East India Company for the privilege of collecting, while
651 in some other years the commune headmen were too slack about the collection. The drought of 1805–1807, the general shortage of coin, the after-effects of Tippu's plundering of Badaga villages, all perhaps contributed to the decline in the payments, if not the fortunes, of the Badagas at this period.

175 Despite the British policy of fixing grain prices they did show
435 fluctuations from year to year. Sarada Raju's excellent study of
458 economic conditions in Madras Presidency during the first half of the nineteenth century clarifies these fluctuations. He does not offer specific data for Coimbatore District (which then included the Nilgiris); nevertheless he is surely justified in his view that on a long-term basis the trend was similar in all districts (Sarada Raju, 1941, 227). As his statistical data for the Presidency adequately confirm (1941, 228–230),

> ... prices were high in the first few years of the nineteenth century. The country had just emerged from a protracted period of war and anarchy during which rival armies and plundering bands had laid whole districts desolate. Cultivators who had fled to the jungles and hills were but gradually returning to their neglected fields.... The period was also marked by a number of scarcities, more or less severe. The very first year, 1799–1800, witnessed a severe dearth and again between 1805 and 1807 occurred another famine, when prices ruled very high. After this prices were persistently low ... from 1807–8 to 1850–51 prices rose above the [economic analyst's] base only on seven occasions; and these were famine years.
>
> When the pendulum swung back, low prices ruled till 1812, when two dry seasons caused a scarcity which lasted till 1813–14. But with the coming of the rains, a lower level was reached and we hear frequent complaints of the "continued low price of grain".... All the Collectors remarked about it, affecting as it did the ryots' [peasants'] ability to pay the revenue (Sarada Raju, 1941, 231–232).[18]

114
(731) While several seasons of adverse weather mentioned by Sarada Raju did give rise to famine conditions in Coimbatore District, which was one of the driest in the Presidency, it is very unlikely that famine also occurred on the Nilgiri Plateau at those times.

2: Hockings E-4,5 (1962-1977) 1980
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Because of their wetter climate the Badagas have always been able to subsist while famine ravaged the South Indian plains (Grigg, 1880, 34). Even so, Badagas were undoubtedly affected by the occasional lowland famines and by fluctuations in the grain prices, since they sold their grain surplus in the nearby lowland markets. We need hardly point out that they would have made unusually good profits from sales in the famine years, but they might also have been taxed more heavily in those years.

MARKETING AFTER 1825

Around the year 1825 the British settlers, through their officials in Ootacamund, began to encourage traders from the plains to develop a market in that town and provided government-owned land for the purpose (Price, 1908, 233). By the end of 1827,

> ...advances had been made to [immigrant] natives to open bazaars...in the place so that 'the market is now well and regularly supplied with every essential article'...a public establishment of palanquin-bearers was kept up; and...villages were beginning to spring up at the foot of the passes (Hayavadana Rao, 1908, 115; compare Grigg, 1880, 288).

The traders in those early days were Chettis from Me:ṭṭupa:ḷaya, Ka:ramuḍu and other nearby lowland villages.[19] The market in Ootacamund was held only on Monday and Tuesday of each week; every Thursday the same traders held a market in Sirumuge, and on Friday were in Ka:ramuḍu. In these places they would collect the produce from the surrounding Chetti-controlled villages, then on Friday night they would start out by bullock-cart up the long Coonoor pass to the plateau. Their merchandise included rice, salt, crude sugar, coconut and other foodstuffs.[20] As the climb was entirely uphill the bullocks rested all day Saturday and Sunday on the slopes and travelled throughout the nights. Later on in the century wealthy Chettis built some free rest-houses by the roadside for these journeys. The carts regularly reached Ootacamund on Sunday evening after a forty-eight hour haul. After two days of trading the Chettis left with their loaded carts around four each Tuesday afternoon. By Friday morning they were back in Ka:ramuḍu to repeat the weekly cycle and to barter

2: Hockings E-4,5 (1962-1977) 1980
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their Nilgiri acquisitions for further produce to take up to the hills.

According to modern Badaga informants their forebears did not use cash at the Ootacamund market during the first two decades of its existence. They exchanged the products of their own lands for the foodstuffs brought up by Chettis. In this way the Nilgiri Plateau was exporting a variety of goods to Ka:ramuḍu and its environs, especially clarified butter, onions, honey, coriander, opium and millet hay.

The initial period of barter in the bazaar passed as the town acquired a few regular shops. Later in the nineteenth century coinage came into use in the market, now open every day, and a government superintendent fixed the day's prices (Ouchterlony, 1848, 72; Price, 1908, 187). One could even borrow money there at 2 or 3% per month interest (depending on the security). Monday and Tuesday in Ootacamund, Thursday in Sirumuge, Friday in Ka:ramuḍu and Saturday in Me:ṯṯupa:ḷaya are however still called 'shandy days',[21] and it is still customary for Badagas to visit the Nilgiri towns on Monday, their weekly holiday, and to send truckloads of farm produce to Me:ṯṯupa:ḷaya or to Ka:ramuḍu each Friday. The transition to exclusive use of coinage in the market took a very long time, for as recently as 1924 Gaymard was able to remark that when they made their weekly trips to town some Badagas did not carry a purse but instead a basket or sackful of grain which they would exchange there for salt, pimentos, utensils and cloth (Gaymard, 1924, 2–3).

ITINERANT TRADERS ON THE PLATEAU

Both before and after these town bazaars were established the Badagas maintained another kind of link with the lowland economy. Chettis from villages lying directly east of the Nilgiris used to (and still do) come up onto the plateau once a month on foot for petty trading. Badagas call them Regional Chettis *(ṇa:ḍu ceṭṭi)*, in reference perhaps to the restricted range of each man's trading itinerary. Although living in a Tamil-speaking area their native tongue is Kannada. Their settlements in and near the towns of Sirumuge, Me:ṯṯupa:ḷaya and Ka:ramuḍu are concerned with petty trade, weaving and agriculture. The Chetti and his family weave cloth in their home for the Badagas; and until the advent of the Ootacamund bazaar they were the regular source for cloth

2: Hockings E-4,5 (1962-1977) 1980
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7

Growth of the Cash Economy

IMPACT OF BRITISH IDEAS ON THE BADAGA ECONOMY (1799–1850)

During the first half of the nineteenth century the British took a number of administrative steps which moved the basal Badaga economy decisively, if unintentionally, into the status of a monetized market economy. The ceding of the Nilgiri Plateau to the East India Company by the Treaty of Seringapatam in 1799 was the first step in this process. Though it was another twenty years before any British actually settled on the plateau the demand of land-revenue payment became more insistent and regulated than it had been under Tippu Sultan's tenuous régime. Badagas must therefore have been obliged to trade more persistently with the lowlands to acquire the coinage being demanded at the Dannaika Ko:le outpost every year.[1]

A second point of impact on the Badaga economy was the Company's policy of fixing grain prices. The rigid control of prices, attempted by the District Collectors throughout Madras Presidency, must have encouraged the Badagas to market grains in the Coimbatore Plain (which lay within that Presidency), where they could feel somewhat confident about getting satisfactory prices and not being cheated. Had the grain prices been more of a gamble the Badagas would have been less inclined to produce a surplus of grain and carry it the long distance down to the market.

When the pioneering John Sullivan came to the hills in 1819 he

[p. 147]

41 Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
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without some further notes on body ornaments. Men as well as women usually wear gold earrings, which are still made from melted gold sovereigns. Women also have gold nose-rings, always worn in the left nostril. Gold, silver or brass armlets may be worn by women just above the right elbow. Numerous silver, gold or glass bangles will be on the wrists; men too wore a silver bangle and silver or copper toe-rings until 50 years ago. Silver or steel rings are worn on the fingers of both sexes (Thurston 1909: 81-82). Necklaces of great variety are also favoured by girls. In general, where gold ornaments are too costly women wear them in filagree silver, brass, copper, iron or steel instead (Grigg 1880: 220). Badagas believe that if a person wears gold, the length of his lifetime will be greater. One might think that wearing gold invited theft; but in fact it seems that this did not often occur amongst the Badagas. Throughout the nineteenth century men, when travelling from village to village, carried a walking-staff with a small axe-head in lieu of the handle, for protection. When however they were to walk to the plains on a trading expedition (prior to 1825) they would first divest themselves of all ornaments, including even their silver waist-bands and any richly made cloak. They were clearly very afraid of brigands, even though they travelled in a group of up to 100 men.

This still does not complete the list of ornaments, however. Priests wear a silver ring during each festival. Some of the headmen wear gold or silver "rings of office" on their fingers, given to their ancestors by East India Company officials or even earlier chieftains of Mysore. The headman of Ke:ti wears one called *sinaganige*, which his ancestor seems to have taken from another Badaga headman after a hand-to-hand fight. It is now worshipped in his home every Monday. Such rings can always be given as security against a fine, and are conventionally worth 1,000 rupees in gold coins. Women who go barefoot — still the great majority today — wear silver rings on three or four toes of each foot. (In Southern India slippers are associated mainly with Muslim women and Hindu dancing girls.)

Until about 1930, it was the custom for men to carry non-collapsible umbrellas made of palm leaves on a cane frame. (Such umbrellas can still be seen in Kerala occasionally.) Since the Nilgiri Plateau is very wet for a part of the year (roughly 20 ins. in May-July, and another 30 ins. the rest of the year), these or their more recent Western equivalents often substitute for a walking stick. Until very recently it was thought disrespectful to the men for women to carry